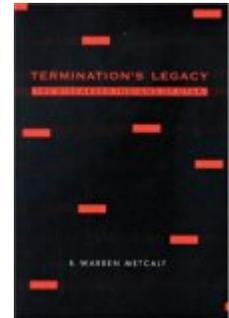




**R. Warren Metcalf.** *Termination's Legacy: The Discarded Indians of Utah.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002. x + 305 pp. \$55.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8032-3201-3.



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New Directions in the History of the Termination Era

Warren Metcalf, a professor of history at the University of Oklahoma, has written a fascinating and disturbing account of how the termination program of the 1950s impacted a small group of Utes on the Uintah-Ouray Reservation in Utah. He investigates how the intersection of Mormon theology, the politics of Utah Senator Arthur W. Watkins, conflicts over blood quantum, and the rhetoric of race resulted in the pointless termination of a few hundred mixed-blood Utes. Metcalf's work points to new directions for scholars interested in the termination era because he deconstructs many of the common assumptions and accepted arguments about a decade that continues to confound those studying it. In what reads alternately as a penetrating exposé on political expediency and a trenchant scholarship that engages issues such as the racialization of Indian identity, *Termination's Legacy* is a welcome addition to the literature.

Metcalf states that the Ute example provides a case study of "identity politics on the local, state,

and federal levels," but this is a modest characterization of a sophisticated study (p. 12). On the most basic level, this book discusses how Utah's Arthur Watkins, a Mormon U.S. Senator, used Indians in his home state as a model for the termination program he sponsored. In this sense, *Termination's Legacy* offers an important piece to the larger puzzle of how this legislation began by tracing how a small group of Senators steered the policy through Congress. But Metcalf has produced something different because he elaborates on standard interpretations of termination by analyzing the influence of religious beliefs, state politics, inter-tribal strife, and numerous "unplanned, unexpected, and even irrational elements of causation" (p. 10). This study fills an important gap in the historiography long dominated by micro-studies of the Menominee and Klamath and macro-studies by Kenneth Philp and Donald Fixico.[1]

Metcalf breaks important ground by historicizing debate over mixed-blood identity within local, state, and national arenas during the mid-twentieth century. Long overlooked, "the majority

of terminated Indians in Utah were the so-called mixed-blood Utes" who, according to Metcalf, were not considered "sufficiently 'Indian' to merit study" (p. 3). Focusing on these people places Indian identity in the center of the story and raises important questions about race, acculturation, blood quantum, and internal tribal divisions simplified as "factionalism." Metcalf argues that mixed-blood identity and legitimacy fell under the gaze not only of Watkins and other terminationists, but tragically, fellow Utes who decided to sacrifice the group for their own preservation. Ultimately, "termination policy resulted from the collision of ideas about the status and identity of American Indians," and as the Ute case illustrates, those debates tore tribal communities apart, wrested families from their moorings, and left a long and bitter legacy for those discarded (pp. 11-12).

After an insightful introduction, the book is organized into eight thematic chapters that combine narrative and analysis. Metcalf surprisingly begins his story with a non-Indian: Arthur W. Watkins, "one of the keys to understanding termination" (p. 15). Steeped in traditional Mormon views about Indians, Watkins fused his Republican beliefs about government, his status as chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Indian Affairs, and his connections with prominent lawyers and Mormon officials to generate a program to divest Utah Indians of their land and identity. Several chapters include discussion of how Mormon ideology influenced the thinking and actions of Watkins, and this makes for fascinating reading. The specifics of Metcalf's argument are one of the most intriguing contributions of this work because he critically examines what policy makers "really" meant while using rhetoric such as "freeing" and "liberating" Indians from government wardship. Rather than rely on generalities about a fiscally conservative Congress or limiting his analysis to assumptions that well-meaning politicians wanted to "integrate" Indians into the mainstream of American life, Metcalf illuminates a web of in-

terests and intrigues that divided the Utes and exacerbated tensions within the community along lines of "blood." Ensuing chapters introduce characters such as Ernest Wilkinson, a nationally known attorney, and one of the most "successful" lawyers involved with the Indian Claims Commission, who shepherded the tribe through the ICC and won for them \$31 million. Yet Wilkinson and Watkins, along with "full-blood" members of the tribe, forced the issue of who qualified as a "real" Indian deserving of the windfall.

The bulk of the book attempts to unravel the interplay of history, band identity, forced removal, cultural misunderstanding, the complexities of Indian law, and rigid racial categories that impacted the lives of Utes. Coupled with the hostile atmosphere of the 1950s, the array of ethnic and cultural groups on the reservation struggled to confront common threats to their livelihood. However, when Watkins and other politicians essentially blackmailed the tribe with a choice between termination and losing the ICC monies, mixed-blood members of the Uintah band jockeyed with "full-blood" members of the Uncompahgre and White River bands to determine acceptable levels of "blood quantum" as definitions of tribal membership. Here is where Metcalf makes some of his most important analytical and historical points. For instance, the Indian Reorganization Act adopted by the tribe in the 1930s ambiguously defined membership by using the term "Indian" rather than Ute, thus opening the door for members with ancestry from Shoshones, Paiutes, and Navajos. When the tribe found itself discussing disbursement of ICC monies in the 1950s, full-blood leaders redefined tribal membership with more narrow uses of Ute identity that excluded many mixed bloods. Wilkinson in particular feared these divisions would undermine Congressional appropriation of the settlement, so he and others encouraged the "detrribalization" of the mixed-bloods, which the full-bloods agreed to. Metcalf trenchantly notes that this exclusion of the mixed-bloods, arguably the most capable of adapting to a

modern market economy, while preserving the full-bloods reveals the moral bankruptcy of termination.

Ensuing chapters illuminate the painful and intricate maneuverings of Watkins, Wilkins, Dillon Myer, and local leaders blinded by racial dichotomies and political expediency. Though some of the details tend to divert one's attention from the larger story, they are crucial to Metcalf's central argument. Perhaps the most striking aspect of the era's cynicism is the case of the Southern Paiutes and their legal counsel, John Boyden. In what can only be seen as a ploy to garner support for the larger termination agenda, Watkins worked with Boyden to essentially destroy the communal land base and tribal identity of a small band of Paiutes in southwestern Utah. Using them as a test case to demonstrate the efficacy of his "freedom program," Watkins, who had become a central figure on the ICC board, threw dozens of families into abject poverty despite their repeated objections to termination. Ironically, by the late 1970s, they would expose Watkins ethnocentric and self-serving agenda by filing for, and obtaining, federal recognition.

Ultimately the mixed-blood Utes were terminated and cast adrift to compete with other "ethnic minorities" for economic and social assistance. In another irony, many of the terminated families had to rely on the "big government" programs that Republicans generally wanted to cut. This point more or less reveals the hypocrisy of terminationists' arguments that they wanted to reduce federal spending and "free" Indians from government dependency, when the families eventually had to rely on another set of federal programs to survive. The result is a political shell game that ruined many lives for the sake of Congressional grandstanding. As victims of a narrow-minded and arguably illegal process that ignored the wishes of Native people, one might view Metcalf's rendering of their story as a throwback to older liberal interpretations of Indian history that

painted Indians as monochromatic objects of bad policies created by bad people. This is not the case. Metcalf has written a well-documented book that takes a distinct stand on a series of complex and painful issues. He has also taken the time to speak with members of the affected Ute communities to understand their sides of the story and their versions of the past. This sensitivity reveals the persistence of Indian identity after termination, but it also highlights the ongoing legacy of undemocratic policies that ignored and denied the rights of sovereign Indian nations.

Metcalf's concluding chapters especially deserve attention because he shifts from his narrative on political culture during the 1950s to a more inclusive analysis of racial formation, ethnic identity, and the power of "blood rhetoric." Drawing upon scholars as wide ranging as Frederick Barth, Stephen Cornell, Melissa Meyer, Jack Forbes, and Michael Omi, Metcalf engages the colonial imposition of essentialist paradigms shaping modern Indian identity. Blood quantum, long a convoluted and contentious issue, comes under particular scrutiny for it combines a bureaucratic and administrative need for categorization with an anti-intellectual notion that biologists and others have long debunked. Blood quantum inherently presents Native people with a paradoxical situation because, as several of Metcalf's Ute interviewees observe, it locates cultural identity in genetic characteristics that do not determine the worldview, language, and self-perception of an individual. In the United States context especially, it denies the fluidity of identities and ignores the reality of cultural and ethnic boundary-crossing by replacing hybridity with the fallacy of static racial categories. Metcalf's discussion of race and identity especially shed light on how the rhetoric of blood is deployed by members of Native communities to gain legitimacy over one another, while at the same time drawing artificially distinct boundaries between "full" and "mixed" bloods. This analysis makes the book especially

useful for scholars in American Indian history searching for ways to address this complex topic.

With these theoretical contributions to American Indian history, along with his meticulous archival research, Warren Metcalf has demonstrated how historians can revitalize an otherwise well-trodden path through the termination era. His look at the influence of Mormon beliefs about Indians, coupled with the political expediency, greed, and ethnocentric figures such as Watkins, Wilkinson, and Boyden, make for sobering reading. Native views on tribalism, "factionalism," blood quantum, and race relations also make this an important study. Once one wades through some of the thick, though important, details, *Termination's Legacy* emerges as an excellent example of where solid research can go. Scholars and graduate students of Indian history, race relations, and ethnic studies will find Metcalf's work quite engaging, but undergraduates may have difficulty with the nuances and complexity of some of this book's finer points.

#### Note

[1]. Nicolas Peroff, *Menominee Drums: Tribal Termination and Restoration, 1954-1974* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982); Kenneth Philp, *Termination Revisited: American Indians on the Trail to Self-Determination, 1933-1953* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999); Donald Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945-1960* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986).

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